



## INSTRUMENTS, PROCESSES AND THE GOSPEL.

Ecumenism, whether we like it or not, is going to loom large on the Christian agenda for 1989. The British Council of Churches is being pensioned off in order to make way for the new Ecumenical Instruments. So far the Inter-Church Process has gathered the Roman Catholics within its wake together with exultant denominational leaders and representatives of nearly all persuasions. The Process is rolling forward and is set to hit the Baptist Assembly in April. What will happen then will undoubtedly be significant whatever the outcome. Some will want to jump out of the way. Others will want to be swept up in its train. Still others fear that if we stand in its path, we poor Baptists will get flattened. Most, I fear, will have very little idea of the issues and consequences involved.

It may seem churlish to enter a cautionary note into the proceedings, but the time has come to state one's misgivings about the typical nature of British ecumenism. Firstly, let me state that I am not a 'separatist', and that I am happy with the idea of being a 'pilgrim' with other 'pilgrims'. However, I am distinctly uneasy about being a stage in a Process and a cog in an Instrument (whatever happened to the image of the Body of Christ?) I find myself unable to relate with any degree of confidence and integrity to an ecumenism that lives and moves and has its being in conferences for specialists, and in corridors of ecclesiastical power.

Secondly, let's be sure of what we are talking about. We are not talking about a grandiose scheme of Church Union (much beloved by 'ecumaniacs' as the panacea for all ills). At least I hope that any faint whiff of the idea contained in earlier documents relating to the Swanwick Report will have been expunged. The Ecumenical Instruments are simply intended to facilitate the process whereby Christians from different denominations can better work together at the local, regional and national levels. Presumably the aim of these Instruments will be to encourage Christians to move from an attitude of co-operation with each other to a policy of commitment to each other. Baldly stated that is indeed laudable but, for two main reasons, it leaves me cold.

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'Mainstream' Newsletter is designed to encourage life and growth within the Baptist Union. On the assumption that contributors are in sympathy with this aim, they have full liberty of expression. Views expressed in the newsletter are strictly those of individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Editor, or of the Mainstream Executive and Advisory Council.

The first reason is that while the Swanwick Report and Proposals are an attempt to respond to grassroots feelings, they actually reflect an 'institutional' agenda. Once you move away from the local church level you enter the world of hierarchies and regional/national structures together with the political animals that are attracted to the business of drawing up reports, attending committees and 'working' the system. It is inevitable that the concerns of the local church agenda become subject to the needs of maintaining and promoting the concerns of the para-church organisation (which is, after all, what a denomination is, isn't it and what an ecumenical instrument will be, won't it?) It is all too easy for the professional clerics to take over and dictate the running.

It is the case that the 'episcopal' churches will not give power to their local churches. Yet, commitment to other Christians is necessarily expressed at the local level where the power is absent, not at regional or national level where the power is present. One looks in vain for any authority structure in the New Testament outside of the local church, for the good reason that the breath of the Spirit and the atmosphere of the Institution are inimical to each other.

The second and more important reason is that the lifeblood (or mainspring if you want a technical image to fit with instruments) of Christian activity seems to be decidedly absent in this Process, viz. theology. By this I mean that what we believe about God, as He is revealed in the Bible, must control what we do, otherwise we are neither true to God nor to ourselves.

Now it simply will not do to say that the texts on unity (John 17 etc.) are a sufficient theological basis for the ecumenical movement's goals. Christ's prayer for unity presupposes a common acceptance of dominical and apostolic teaching as the basis for that unity. One Father, One Lord and One Spirit have One Gospel for One Body. This Gospel, of course, is focused upon Christ and him crucified.

Alister McGrath, in his gem of a book, 'The Enigma of the Cross' (Hodder, £6.95), draws the inevitable conclusion from this. He writes,

"The quest for the identity and relevance of Christianity is intimately linked with the crucified Jesus - so intimately, in fact, that ANY version of Christianity which is unable to accommodate the centrality of the crucified Christ must have its claim to be called 'Christian' challenged". (p.36). He then proceeds to demonstrate that any knowledge we have about this event is derived from the Bible, so that not only is the event itself God-given, so also is its interpretation.

Any interpretation of the cross which does not do full justice to the biblical data strikes at the heart of the Christian Faith. Alister McGrath further proceeds to expose the inadequacy of Liberal interpretations of the cross over and against the classical Evangelical interpretation of the cross (see also John Stott's 'The Cross of Christ').

At present I have little confidence that the cruciality of biblical theology, as a basis for united action, is being taken seriously enough by the devotees of ecumenism. The most sustained attempt at such activity in recent years is to be found in the ARCIC II report 'Salvation and the Church'. Yet even here (notwithstanding the undoubted theological acumen that the Roman Catholics bring to ecumenical discussions), Reformation and Theology scholar, Alister McGrath, has shown that the issues which divided the Western Church over the interpretation of the doctrine of justification by faith, were not addressed by the Commission. This does not augur well for the future. The cracks have been papered over.

We would do well to remind ourselves that "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) is still binding upon us, and that in its context Paul is referring to the winds of false doctrine. Agreed theology is essential to agreed action. "Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?" (Amos 3:2). This is not pulpit hectoring but plain common sense. Before I can commit myself to any common action I must know upon what basis that action has been agreed.

We see this at work in relationships between churches at the local level. For example, why is it that our church works very happily and fully with a neighbouring Anglican parish, but not at all with another neighbouring parish? It is because there is virtually no meaningful common theological ground with the latter. This is because the views we hold about the Gospel are contradictory at several vital points. Hence we cannot agree on what we can do together either in worship or in mission. This doesn't stop me from being nice to the Vicar and his members and occasionally lending them some of our chairs. But until the theological impasse has been solved we cannot co-operate with that church as a church. If Ecumenical Instruments are not going to deal with these real issues of 'disunity' then what do they really hope to achieve except a form of Christian charades? It isn't the denominations that divide us so much as different theologies.

My experience tells me that ecumenical (and for that matter, Baptist) co-operation and commitment is alive and well at the local level where honest agreement about theological issues is arrived at. It is surely significant that the best ecumenical scheme at the regional/national level is the Evangelical Alliance. It so happens that the largest ecumenical gathering in this country is Spring Harvest which is co-sponsored by the EA. Not that differences don't exist among the constituent members of the EA - but there is more than enough theological agreement for united action. As I say to my episcopally - ordained colleagues, the apostolic succession is the evangelical succession. We are united in space and through time by the unchanging Gospel of Christ and his Apostles.

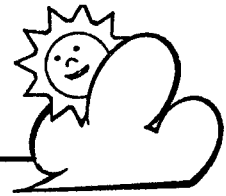
I suspect that the amended proposals of the Swanwick Report to be presented to our churches in the next couple of months will contain much 'ecuspeak' that will avoid the real issues which are at stake. But let's see first of all and ensure that they are debated fully. I hope that our Baptist representatives have worked hard to ensure that evangelical concerns have been noted in the discussions so far. If not, then they have failed our constituency. I fear that the professional ecumenists and willing ecumaniacs have already decided the shape of things to come, and no matter what the churches say, the result will be the same. The institutional agenda will triumph.

Meanwhile, the BU is on the horns of a dilemma. This is illustrated at our Borough (Ecumenical) Deans meeting, where it was pointed out that as the Baptists were not a Church (with a capital "C" - despite the notice outside 4 Southampton Row), the Baptist representative could only represent his own congregation, and therefore could only be accorded 'observer' status. Of course, they are absolutely right.

The forthcoming Mainstream Conference at Swanwick will see this whole matter debated. We need a full and informed discussion within Mainstream on the full Swanwick Report and the Proposals to be presented to our churches individually and in assembly. It will not go away. We must not bury our heads in the sand - lest our voice be muffled and ignored.

Terry Griffith.

# The GIG Syndrome



A few months ago my wife Rita and I were enjoying a very happy evening with one of the young couples in the Church. The husband had recently become a Christian and been baptised. They had been to several big Christian celebration type meetings in the Town Hall recently. Exciting contemporary Christian music; gifted and entertaining speakers with nation-wide reputations; a high proportion of young people present. 'We know its right to stay at the Church', they said, 'but we do feel tempted by what is going on elsewhere'. 'Elsewhere' means one of the House Church fellowships in the area.

A week or two earlier I had been chatting to a Christian man in his 40's. He and his wife used to be involved in a local charismatic fellowship, where he was converted. They had found the music attractive and the fellowship warm. But after a while relationship problems had arisen and disillusionment had set in. They tried another Church briefly but have not now for several years attended anywhere regularly. They are friendly with several other couples in the same boat in their neighbourhood - Christians who meet occasionally in their homes, inviting favourite speakers to come and share with them, but who have rejected Church life completely.

It seems to me that there is a pattern in these two examples which indicates a real problem facing today's Church. In my previous Church I saw it happening as well. Christians who are sincere and often - though not always - young in the faith, are initially attracted to a 'new style' church and then end up in spiritual isolation. Frequently the initial move is away from their existing Church, accompanied more often than not with a personality clash or conflict of one kind or another. I have been involved personally with a number of people for whom this has been true, and have had links with several fellowships set up precisely for disillusioned Christians. They have usually either foundered or have produced more disillusionment than they started with!

One of the most distressing things about this 'GIG' (the 'Grass is Greener') Syndrome is that what starts people off on this track to ineffectiveness and isolation is not genuine Christian character, or good Bible teaching, nor effective and lasting evangelism, but something much more worldly. Is it simply sour grapes for me to describe what attracts them as being worldly? Am I right in saying that the speakers are first and foremost entertainers; that the music is professionally performed; that the worship is packaged and presented in a smooth and interesting way? One of the standard pleas in the Church in the recent past has been - 'if something is worth doing its worth doing well', and 'why should Christians put up with things in the Church they wouldn't accept outside'. I say 'Amen' to that, but I also say that there is a great danger in saying those things so loudly that other more important things are forgotten. There is no reason why high secular standards should conflict with true spirituality, just as there is no reason why worldly success or wealth should conflict with a deep faith, but there is a real and subtle danger that they will. When the world's side is given a priority it does not deserve, and when Christians are misled, mistaking the packaging for the content, then God help us! If they do not disc over their mistake, their faith will be inadequate to carry them through tough times; if they do, their faith is bound to be damaged.

There is no doubt that we have reason to be grateful to the 'new style' Churches. They have brought a life and vitality to Church life generally; a new confidence in God and a new excitement to Christian

living. But let us not get swept away to the extent that we lose our ability to discern the work of the enemy. Nor must we feel so threatened that we retreat into a grumbling traditionalism. Another temptation is to lose confidence and try in a half-hearted way to change in order to keep those we are fearful of losing. These are false trails. We need to recognise in all this - as in so many developments in Church life - that we are caught up in processes that effect the whole of society. Generally speaking, we live in an age where two things are happening. One is that the image is increasingly more important than meaning - where the manner of presentation is more important than what is presented. You can sell pretty well anything these days with a good enough marketing strategy and advertising campaign. A major part of the technique is to create a sense of dissatisfaction - a sense of 'I'm missing out on something'. If you like, a promotion of the GIG syndrome. In the same way, any amount of superficial spirituality and half-baked Bible teaching can be sold if the packaging is right. Good salesmen in the Church face a powerful temptation!

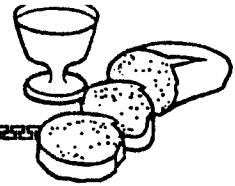
The second thing that is happening in our society is the break up of community life. I think of a community as a place where people live together, meeting each other and doing things together, tolerating each other's foibles and learning to give and take. Whether it is in the family, in local communities (neighbourhoods, towns etc) or in the nation, we seem less and less able to do this. We need each other less; we are urged to be more independent - financially and in other ways; we travel further to work, to shop and for leisure; our lives are increasingly compartmentalised. Similarly in the Church we seem less able to handle the give and take of belonging to a Church community. Differences and conflicts are more difficult to handle and we prefer to avoid the demands of other people if possible.

It's one thing to identify a problem - it's another to know what to do about it. But we need to try, for the sake of the work of the Kingdom. One thing we can do is to ask - if I may borrow a phrase from politics - 'where's the beef?' Let's not allow our concerns about the shape of the bun to obscure the more important question about what's inside (pace Tony Mallion, Newsletter No. 29). This amounts, I suppose, to a plea to take theology seriously. In some places the very word "Theology" is a term of scorn. If a debate or argument is 'theological' it must be irrelevant and unworthy of attention. Such an attitude towards the truth of God and the meaning of the Gospel of Christ is bound to lead in the long run to a profound weakening of the Church, leading to her becoming prey to all kinds of false teaching. By all means let us think about how the truth is presented, but let us think more about the truth itself.

Another thing we can do is to emphasise the importance of tolerance and forgiveness within the Church. Perhaps the greatest single test of true Christian discipleship is whether or not we are able to get on with other Christians - whether or not we allow our natural differences to undermine our spiritual unity. To allow personal conflicts and different views to lead to the fragmentation of the Christian community is a disaster. The first fruit of the Spirit - agape love - means tolerance, forgiveness and an uncompromising commitment to each other for the sake of Christ. We need to say loud and clear that Jesus calls us to stick together, and if we do not win the victory of his love in the Church, we can never hope to in the world.

Peter Shepherd,  
Pastor, Middlesbrough Baptist Church.

# The EUCHARIST



During my days as a student at Northern Baptist College in Manchester I was introduced as a Baptist to the concept of the EUCHARIST being the central and ordered act of worship of the Christian church. I remember many moving services within the college chapel and the sense of solidarity as we served one another from a common loaf and from a common cup. I have to own to an evolution in my thinking on this matter during my time in the Baptist ministry. I began being happy with the traditional form - the quiet, upper room type of service, starkly simple, attended by a few people. I ended wanting this act to be the regular and central act of worship of the whole church in which we found time and space to give thanks, receive forgiveness, intercede, hear the gospel, enter into grace and be commissioned.

I believe that where we place the Eucharist or Lord's Supper within the forms of worship of the church will depend very largely, on the theology which interprets it to us. I do not want to raise a hornet's nest of protest nor delve unprofitably into eucharistic theology, but I am convinced that if our theology is Zwinglian (merely a memorial) then we will appreciate the ministry of the Word at the expense of the ministry of the Sacrament. Some of the Catholic views may stress the opposite, to detriment of the preaching of the gospel. I came to believe I found myself at an extreme. I became convinced that John 6 could not be understood outside of the context of the Eucharist. I was greatly helped by the section on the Lord's Supper in 'Paul' by Herman Ridderbos. What he says is so significant that I would like to quote two sections of it:

"As Israel was, in Moses, once led out of Egypt and further kept alive in the wilderness by God's miraculous power, so for the church, not only does its once for all deliverance lie in Christ's death, but its continual food and drink as well. The Lord's Supper.... is spiritual food and drink.... it makes us live out of Christ's self surrender and thus imparts His Spirit" (420).

"It is not a question here only of the commemoration of what has once taken place in the past, but no less of its abiding actual redemptive significance.... It is not merely a subjective recalling to mind, but an active manifestation of the continuing and actual significance of the death of Christ.... In the Supper.... the foundations of the church are laid bare...." (421-423).

(Paul - an Outline of His Theology. H. Ridderbos. SPCK).

The church, as church not simply as individuals, re-engages with the power of Calvary. It enters into all that Jesus died to make our own, to paraphrase a modern hymn. Christ is dynamically present within the signs of bread and wine to sustain and nurture His Church.

I wonder whether the Zwinglian view, so inimical to adoration and so individualistic in its modern dress (the little cups), can be separated from a view of the world which is unBiblically mechanistic. A Biblical view of the world would conclude that it is somewhat like a sacrament. It shouts out 'here is God'. There is more going on than meets the eye. The popular Christian view is still rather coloured both by Newtonian mechanistic views (it works like a machine) and by Deism (good machines don't need constantly tinkering with). For a recent work which gives a more exciting and more Biblical view see "And The Trees Clap Their Hands" Virginia Owens (Eerdmans). If God is dynamically present within the universe, within the Bible, within Christ, within us why should He not be dynamically present within these 'gifts of bread and wine'?

Our attitude towards the Lord's Supper has been helpfully stated by the late David Watson (I believe in the Church). It is expressed by our looking in four directions.

We should look back

We need to constantly remind ourselves of the overwhelming grace that meets us at the Cross. The love of Christ which washes our feet, the servant-King, so careless of His dignity, so sensitive of our need.

"My faith looks back to see,  
The burden Thou didst bear.  
When hanging on the accursed tree,  
And knows her guilt was there".

(Watts)

We should look within

"Cleanse out the old leaven for Christ our paschel lamb has been sacrificed for us. Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth". Let a man examine himself, says Paul. We come to confess our sin, our need, our spiritual poverty. We say, "We do not presume to come your table, merciful Lord trusting in our own goodness but in your great mercy".

We should look around

This is a community meal. It speaks not only of union but also of communion. "We who are many are one body because we all partake of the one bread who was broken for us". Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 11 of 'not discerning the body' - i.e. coming to this place with our individualistic and privatised concerns.

We should look ahead

All that we experience now (and it may be a great deal) is a foretaste, a down payment. There is a NOW but also a NOT YET to which this eating and drinking together points. We shall be royally banqueted, feasted, we shall celebrate with splendour and tears and laughter. So we look forward to consummation, renewed fellowship with the saints in glory.... "Then face to face".

All of our faith is encapsulated in this celebration. We should approach it with reverence. Some moods will be tasteless or out of keeping. We must prevent it from being trivialised or becoming sentimental. The church has embraced a certain shape, a skeleton of meaning which should be clothed, possibly with homemade or unstructured material, possibly with liturgical material. At the college in which I serve, we occasionally use one of the ASB rites of the Church of England or sometimes, using the structure within those rites, clothe it with our own words and worship. However, we do it and whatever we believe about it, when we come to this place we are on holy ground, we bow low in awe and wonder, we enter in again to the wonder of redeeming love and triumphant grace.

Timothy Marks. October 1988.

Tim Marks is Director of Pastoral Studies at Moorlands Bible College.

# The Banes & Blessings of Itinerant Preaching



It is generally assumed that the most satisfying role for the preaching pastor revolves around one congregation, to whom that person preaches each Sunday and with whom deep pastoral ties are forged. Yet because many of our Baptist churches are small and do not have regular pastoral oversight the role of itinerant lay preachers and other ministers who supply churches Sunday by Sunday assumes great importance.

Over the past twelve years, whilst on the staff of a college, my ministry has been mainly itinerant. As one reflects upon this, there are three clear blessings.

1. A personal vision As one moves around the country one gains a great sense of the life and vitality that has emerged in many of our churches. It is also beneficial to find oneself in very different styles of worship and to learn to appreciate the variety of liturgy and freedom which exist within the Baptist family.

Moving around the churches is also fertile in providing ideas, since different churches are strong in different aspects of the multi-faceted work that we undertake.

2. Individual need One often enjoys the hospitality of Christian homes and I have found a great need among Christian leaders and particularly their partners, to talk to someone who is slightly detached from their situation and not a member of an official body. Conversation has ranged from situations in the church to the heartache of children forsaking their love for Christ; marital disharmony; business; and a multitude of other needs.

3. Corporate challenge The itinerant ministry can have a particular prophetic edge; partly because there are situations that one knows and one can speak into them with a courage that the local pastor would find difficult. On many occasions one goes into a situation knowing little about the specific detail of church life there, but guided by the Spirit, the word becomes particularly appropriate and provides vision, stimulation, challenge and comfort to needy congregations and individuals.

As one has moved around a couple of things have struck me as being necessary for our churches at the present time. Firstly, the matter of preparation. There is much prepared worship which can be cold and detached in its enjoyment. But much warm and lively praise which can be so unstructured and 'laid-back' in its approach that it becomes unedifying and anaemic.

In biblical worship the didactic, sacramental, structured and pentecostal are all exemplified, and we need to combine the best elements of each, within helpful worship. There is a particular trend when worship is ill-prepared, for verbosity to predominate. This can characterise the worship-leader, who gives a running commentary on every item, who prays at too great a length, particularly when children are present; the song leader who says more about every song than is actually sung; and those who give out notices that ought to be a strategic feature of fellowship life and information but are delivered with stultifying boredom.

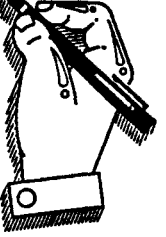
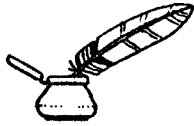


Secondly, the matter of responsiveness. I wish more of our congregations would respond to the worship leader and to each other in more demonstrative ways. I not only mean in terms of 'Amen' after prayers, looking up Bible readings, and listening wide-eyed and alert to the delivery of God's Word. This also concerns building a relationship with one another through an opportunity for greetings and conversation and willingness to pray quietly in pairs for one another's needs. In these ways needs can be met and people can go on their way edified, helped and loved. There is a great danger that, in our denominational life at present, those who respond well can sometimes lack dignity; others are so dignified that there is little sign of warmth and life in the congregation. Worship needs to be cerebral and yet heartfelt; joyful and yet quiet; embracing the full dimensions of praise, confession thanksgiving, intercession and teaching.

One final word. Just as it is important that in local situations those who participate in worship are trained through helpful encouragement and necessary rebuke; so I wish churches would take far more seriously the need to follow up the visit of itinerant preachers either with a word of encouragement, a letter of acknowledgement, or, occasionally a word of rebuke where that is necessary. So often there is no feed-back at all, and although one knows that the Holy Spirit has been at work, it is good to be aware of the signs that follow the preaching of the Word.

Mike Nicholls,  
Mike is Vice-Principal of Spurgeon's College.

# LETTERS



Dear Sir,

You have by this time, probably, received responses to your questions on the topic of singing in tongues. (Newsletter 29 "The Lord is The Spirit.") I felt, however, that I may be able to contribute towards some answers in that field. Although I am probably no better qualified to answer your questions than many of your other readers, I have had first hand experience of singing in tongues, and some opportunity to think through some of the issues involved.

You ask firstly how singing in tongues functions in worship. I think that the answer to that is that it functions in a number of different ways. I have been in several churches where it is a part of the worship. For some it is something that has become very natural, and people know where and when in a service it is going to come. For others it is more unexpected. Some seem to introduce it, other simply let it happen. Very often it's function in worship is to bring a sense of God's presence and peace. It is something that is very subjective, and at any one meeting when singing in tongues is part of the worship different people will be affected in different ways. Often, for me, it brings a sense of God's beauty and creativity.

Musically something similar seems to occur on each occasion. The chord structure is often very simple, usually using only one chord. Each person participating will be singing either a melody made from a scale around that chord (sometimes with one person taking a lead) or they will simply be singing on one or two notes from that chord. Some will be singing in English, others in tongues.

Usually singing in tongues is not interpreted, and does not, I believe, need to be. It is not the same as when tongues are spoken before people and are not understood, and so need interpretation, as is Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 14. It is more like a group of individuals who are reaching out to God and enjoying His presence. Paul himself points out in 1 Corinthians 14:2. "The one who speaks in strange tongues does not speak to others, but to God." When used in this way the function of tongues is not so much to be understood as simply enjoyed, as the Spirit prays through us with sighs too deep for words. Having said that, on occasions I have heard an individual sing in tongues, while others have listened, and then a sung interpretation given. Here it is more obviously something that needs to be understood, and not something being done by many individuals at the same time.

Your last question in essence was whether singing in tongues breaks the rules that Paul lays down. I believe that it does not and that almost the opposite is true! When I consider the context of verse 15 of 1 Corinthians 14 where Paul says "I will sing with my Spirit, but I will sing also with my mind." I am left with the impression that Paul is there speaking of singing in tongues. In verse 14 Paul says that if he prays in tongues, his spirit is helped, but not his intellect. His answer to this problem is that he needs both. So he starts verse 15 by stating that he will pray with the Spirit, by implication from verse 14, in tongues, and with his understanding also, that is in his native tongue. He will sing with the Spirit, again by implication, in tongues, and he will sing with his understanding. For most of us, most of the time, we do not see the balance working out in quite those terms. Many of us would hope that we could achieve a spiritual balance in our

worship without the use of tongues, whether sung or spoken. I am sure, from this verse, that Paul saw much more clearly the need for both tongues and English, both in prayer and in singing.

I hope that this is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Rev. Robert Stacey, Northchurch, Berkhamsted, Herts.

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Dear Terry,

Concerning "singing in tongues", I would like to offer a few pieces of historical information in response to Judy MacKenzie Dunn's letter. (Newsletter 30).

Naturally from the early centuries of the Christian church we have very few pieces of hymns, and as far as I know only one example of a hymn plus musical notation, namely a fragment of a hymn in Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 1786, dating from the mid-3rd century. This has a single melodic line, and bears a reasonable resemblance to later plain-chant.

In the first few centuries, hymn-singing was a solo activity. In the 4th century there began to be a little congregational participation. For example, during the career of Athanasius the congregation at Alexandria did join in the refrain of Psalm 136 ("For His mercy endures forever"), as well as the Liturgical responses before the eucharistic prayer ("Lift up your hearts" etc.)

The first known reference to congregational hymn-singing comes when Ambrose was holding a sit-in against the Arians in Milan in 386 AD.

I cannot think of any reference to "singing in tongues" in early patristic literature. Indeed, apart from the experience of Montanism in late-2nd century Asia Minor I do not know of any other reference to speaking in tongues from the early period. And by the 4th century the whole question of charismatic gifts was so strange that Ambrosiaster can think of the gift in terms of linguistic ability, and some scribes were actually altering the so-called "Long Ending" of Mark's gospel to leave out the references to the charismatic gifts there.

Therefore, I would agree with Judy's first suggestion, namely that "modern charismatic congregations subconsciously reverted to a suitably Mystical/ecclesiastical sound". And I would further say that there is nothing about this that would prevent it also being a work of the Spirit.

Yours sincerely,

Rev. Mike Smith, Golcar, Huddersfield.

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Dear Terry,

I notice with surprise that although Mainstream articles are so stimulating and provocative, they rarely elicit 'letters to the editor'. Of course this may mean that the readers, being mainly pastors and leaders, are too busy beavering away at turning the stimulating ideas into action!

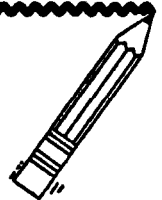
Perhaps my own current concern will stimulate some correspondence either to me personally or for printing in Mainstream. I'm researching causes of division in the local church. Letters to various denominational magazines have brought a mixed response, but more than half of it has been from Baptists.

Why are our churches so vulnerable? The principal causes (so far in my research) seem to be, in ascending order - doctrinal disagreements; the pressures of change; misuse of the church meeting (seeing it as a place for members to assert their constitutional rights and to bring the pastor and leaders to heel); and the outflanking activities of 'Restoration' house churches. The last two (biggest) factors are often inter-related for pretty obvious reasons.

Have we got a major crisis, just when the denomination in general is probably becoming more evangelical, more visionary and more responsive to the Wind of God than in all my thirty years of ministry? Any opinions? I would value them. And even more, I would value facts.

Yours sincerely,

Revd. Donald Bridge, 8 Greenan Way, Doonfoot, Ayr. KA7 4EJ.



#### ADMINISTRY INTRODUCE £25 CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

ADMINISTRY have introduced a new £25 church membership option in order to make their church administration and training resources accessible to even the smallest of churches. Last year members paid a subscription of at least £60.

The ADMINISTRY team have now produced practical resource papers and smaller 'ADMINISHEETS' on a wide range of topics concerned with the organisational aspects of church life. Highly successful training days, DIY training packs and consultancy services are also available to members.

Adrian Prior-Sankey, of Zion Baptist at Creech St. Michael near Taunton, particularly values ADMINISTRY resource papers. The "Welcome to our church!" resource paper was used as a blueprint for their welcome team and full use is being made of ADMINISTRY training events. Derek Wick, administrator at Sutton Coldfield Baptist Church, believes that the resource papers are of value to any size of church because they provide ideas and alternative ways of doing things. "I would be lost without ADMINISTRY membership" he admitted.

ADMINISTRY's £25 membership provides churches with a choice of any two resource papers and a DIY training pack free of charge, full access to all ADMINISTRY resources, bi-monthly news and ADMINISHEETS and a £5 discount for any church member at their open training days. The 'Gold scheme' provides churches with a full personal support service and other benefits from £115, and individual membership is available at £20.

A brochure giving full details and an application form can be obtained from: Marion Brown, ADMINISTRY, 69 Sandridge Rd., St. Albans, AL1 4AG. Tel: 0727 56370.

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## ENGLISH CHURCH CENSUS

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MARC Europe's research team are beginning preparations for their largest and most exciting project to date: a census of church attendance in England.

A Pilot study is underway and in October of next year a survey of every one of England's 38 000 churches will be made.

This will take the form of a short questionnaire asking for details of attendance at services and other related information, such as membership, children's involvement and the nature of the community served by the church. The data will be analysed by denomination and also geographically and a comprehensive report published presenting the findings.

The last census was carried out in 1979, followed by surveys of Wales in 1982 and Scotland in 1984. The results have proved an invaluable resource document and led to much discussion and many new initiatives. Much has happened on the English church scene since 1979. The results of the census, when compared with the data from 10 years ago, will give an accurate picture of where and how the church is growing. The consequences of growth and the reasons for it can then begin to be identified.

The census will also help identify the neediest parts of the country and prove particularly helpful to those involved in inner-city ministry and rural church life.

For further information contact Dr. Kemi Ajayi, Census Administrator.  
Tel: 01 460 399

### WOMEN AND MEN TOGETHER

Three Cross-Currents Seminars are planned at The London Mennonite Centre, 14 Shepherds Hill, London. N6 5AW with Alan and Eleanor Kreider, Judith Gardiner and Others. Questions under consideration will include -

WOMEN - Does the Bible liberate or confine us?

GENDER DIFFERENCES - Are these fixed or flexible?

MEN - Can we collaborate in church and society?

Dates are 10/11 March, 17/18 March or 14/15 April 1989 from Friday 6.30p.m. to Saturday 5.00p.m. Course fees £16 waged and £8 unwaged (with 3 bursaries available. Pre-booking is essential. Tel: 01-340-8775.



The Giving Gift : The Holy Spirit in Person Tom Smail, Hodder & Stoughton, £6.95, 217pp.

This is a very welcome volume from the author of 'Reflected Glory' and 'The Forgotten Father'. It is a theological work of high order. This book differs from 'Reflected Glory' in that it does not concentrate on the work of the Spirit in Christ (giving a Christological emphasis), but rather on the person of the Holy Spirit (giving a trinitarian emphasis). Some views expressed in the earlier book are corrected here.

Tom Smail's conviction is that a proper understanding of the person (not the work) of the Spirit is necessary for maturity in the Christian life and in the Church. This finds its application in the last three chapters. The last chapter on prayer, based mainly on Romans 8, is especially stimulating where prayer is seen as gift rather than duty. The Spirit brings Christ's heavenly intercession ("This King who reigns is also a Priest who prays; he reigns, as it were, from his knees." - p.206) to us on our side of the relationship, and enables us to participate freely within that intercession.

The main part of the book is an exploration of the biblical witness to the relationships and activities of the Spirit among the persons of the Trinity. I found the discussion on the Eastern Orthodox understanding of the Spirit within the Trinity very interesting. Tom Smail has a gift in demonstrating how fine points of theology do in fact have important bearings upon experience and practice. I also found the references to the Son and the Spirit co-operating together in the work of redemption (in conception, baptism, crucifixion and exaltation) very illuminating. Also the Last Discourse material on the Holy Spirit in John 13-17 is helpfully explained.

Perhaps some will baulk at chapter 3 where the plea is made for the creativity of the Spirit in forming tradition that is not contradictory to Scripture - here the author places infant baptism with the doctrine of the Trinity, and the Chalcedonian Statement. At places Tom Smail seems to be walking very near the precipice in his attempt to show that the regulative principle of Calvinism limits the Holy Spirit. Eg. "The Spirit may well say in the Church what the Bible has not yet said." (p.82). Yet he insists on the sufficiency of Scripture. This section needs careful reading in order to understand what the author wants to say about the creativity of the Spirit. His justification for this is found in a quote from page 80:- "The supreme priority of Scripture for all Christian teaching consists, not in its being the last word about Jesus and the gospel, but precisely in its being the first word". However, hopeful liberals will not find any joy here.

I recommend this book for serious study - a sabbatical or reading week book perhaps?

Terry Griffith.

Encounters with Jesus by Stuart Blanch (The Jesus Library, Hodder & Stoughton 1988 240pp, £7.95)

This is a good book, possibly the best contribution to the excellent Jesus Library so far. In it Stuart Blanch reflects on a number of

encounters that Jesus had with a range of people from Legion to Levi, John the Baptist to Jairus the synagogue ruler, Peter to Pontius Pilate.

But this is much more than a collection of blessed thoughts about the Master's dealings with ordinary folk from all walks of life. Blanch's study is focussed on Mark's gospel, so as well as providing insight into how Jesus related to people, it also serves as a first class introduction to Mark - why he wrote, how he gathered his material, how he structured his work, what his key themes are, etc.

Each of the 20 encounters Blanch has selected are self-contained, this leads to a certain amount of repetition - something the author acknowledges in his introduction. But the repetition is not intrusive or irritating and the episodic character of the work means that it is invaluable for the preacher preparing a sermon on a specific character.

Blanch does not only cover encounters with people. He also deals with the Baptism, transfiguration, trial, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. And through it all he brings to the surface the key Marcan themes of discipleship and the person of Jesus (Christology).

Blanch shows his mastery of both the scholarly literature on Mark (of which there has been an avalanche in the past ten years) and the practical exegesis/exposition of scripture needed in our churches in these days. The author not only knows the text and how to interpret it, he also has deep pastoral insight.

Every chapter threw fresh light onto some aspect of Mark's story for me and I set the book down at each reading knowing more about its central character. For Blanch uses his deft scholarly touch and sure-footed exegesis to lead his readers to fresh encounters with Jesus himself. What more could you ask for, except maybe that Hodders bring out a more popularly priced edition?!

Simon Jones,  
London Bible College.

The Logos Story: Elaine Rhoton, STL. 192pp. £4.50.

Many of you will remember the shipwreck of Operation Mobilisations's ship, the LOGOS, early in 1988. This delightful book recounts the amazing story of its inception, and ministry of 17 years. A truly remarkable account, warts and all, of what God was able to do through this venture. It stirred my heart and encouraged me no end. God still raises up godly men and women who are prepared to be considered 'mad' but whom God signally honours. This is a popular history and I recommend it enthusiastically. Royalties are going towards the replacement ship LOGOS II.

Fasting: a Neglected Discipline: David Rushworth Smith, New Wine Press, £1.95, 12pp.

A book which has sold 250,000 copies worldwide on a subject like fasting ought not to be ignored. I happen to think that this is the best book on fasting available, even better than Arthur Wallis' longer popular treatment. The author has drawn deep from the wells of Scripture, history and experience, as a glimpse at the bibliography will prove. Sane, practical and concise. Now all you have to do is buy it and try it!

Terry Griffith,  
Hackney.

## BOOKS RECEIVED

The Bible in One Year - New International Version: Hodder & Stoughton, £9.95 (h/bk). An excellent resource for encouraging disciplined systematic reading of the Scriptures in one year. 365 sections (dated and numbered) with OT reading (in broadly chronological order), NT reading, and a reading from the Psalms or Proverbs. Also contains a guide with maps and index. There is really no excuse for church members not knowing the Bible now. Highly recommended.

NIV School/Compact Bible: Hodder & Stoughton, £4.95 (h/bk). Contains 64 page Bible guide with no previous knowledge of the Bible or Christianity assumed. Lots of helpful material on background and origins of the Bible, together with explanations of Jewish and Christian religions and the link between the OT and NT.

Hymns for Today's Church: Hodder & Stoughton, £4.50 (h/bk). Hardback words edition of second edition of this hymn book from Jubilate Hymns.

Our God is still too Small): John Young, Hodder & Stoughton, £2.50, 190pp. Written by the author of The Case Against Christ. This book deals with questions of what God is like. The Diocesan Evangelist in the diocese of York comes up with a wide range of arguments and illustrations from all walks of life which will give any preacher some excellent material to stimulate thought on the part of interested pagans.

Our God Reigns: Tony Higton, Hodder & Stoughton, £2.95, 294pp. Subtitled "A passionate call for a return to biblical teaching on God's sovereignty in all areas of life." Quite a mixed bag from the rector of Hawkevell. Of interest is the meteorological material he adduces relating to the fire at York Minster and his reasons for seeing this event as having significance as an act of God. Fascinating reading in parts. It makes me glad I'm not an Anglican.

Breaking Free: Nine shattered lives made whole. David Hall, STL/Kingsway, £2.50, 220pp. An easy lightweight testimony book to give to someone who wants to know what Christ can do for people today. Nine examples from all over Europe showing that God is still gloriously at work in conversion.

Declare His Glory: A Fresh Look at Congregational Worship. Christian Brethren Review No. 39, Paternoster Press, £4.00 (incl. p+p), 104pp. Nothing particularly original in this offering from the Brethren fold. John Allan's chapter on Music, Movement and Silence in Worship seems to be the most original of the six chapters.